

TEACHING THE FAITH: CASE STUDIES FROM INDONESIA AND AUSTRALIA

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Abstract

The teaching of a religion in schools not only epitomises but also denotes the beliefs and values of proponents of the religion being taught. The teaching of religion in state schools must be considered within the context of the social and cultural location of religion within society. The cultural contexts for the teaching of the Muslim faith in Indonesia and the Christian faith in Australia are vastly different. This study considered the experiences and perceptions that teachers of religion (in state primary schools) had in Indonesia and Australia. We collected data from four case study teachers from each country about their faith experiences and their experiences as teachers of religious education in lengthy elaborated interviews. We found that the expression of religious understanding and knowledge in educational settings was profoundly influenced by the teachers' own spiritual development. The teachers from both countries had surprisingly similar spiritual journeys through childhood, adolescence and adulthood with a strong involvement with the mosque or church or their peripatetic organisations. However, the Indonesian teachers were teaching faith in a context which, outwardly and proverbially (at least) was overwhelmingly supportive of their role. The Australian teachers were teaching within a secularised cultural context that was ostensibly critical or at least sceptical of the faith base they represented. The Australian teachers saw themselves as counter cultural, minority believers attempting to re-establish a diminishing faith base of reducing relevance. Yet both groups articulated a similar motivation to teach the faith: to honour Allah or God, to reaffirm the Word and to clearly proclaim their belief in the faith basis of national life.

Introduction

Value systems (such as religious systems) are the operating systems of social formations. They are not external to social formations in readiness to be adopted, adapted or rejected. They are integral to the community to which they belong, prescribing beliefs, behaviours and the ways in which beliefs are to be conceived, interpreted and acquired. A religious education system encapsulates the way the younger generation of adherents or community members is to be imbued with the value system (Radcliffe, 2002). It defines what is to be learned and conceives the way it is to be learned which must be consistent with the conceptualisation of the belief system itself (Myers & Diener, 1995, Myers, 2004). National entities such as Indonesia or Australia are politico-cultural conglomerates of a myriad of value systems, which to a greater or lesser extent define and describe some kind of imagined national identity (Hanurawan & Waterworth, 1996). The national identities of newer nations like Indonesia are more contestable than those of older ones. Australia's national identity is also hotly contended and constantly redefined. Even so, while it might be reasonable to claim that Indonesia's national identity is confined within notions of what it means to be Muslim, this in no way adequately accounts for the ten percent of the population that are not Muslim or the shades of difference between expressions of the Muslim faith (Hanurawan & Waterworth, 2004). In numerical terms, there may be more Christian Indonesians than there are Christian Australians. Religious education and sociological literature is replete with discussion of the impact of religion upon society and of the way in which religion is integral to the education of the young. This project set out to

explore the nature of the teaching of 'the faith', through case studies of teachers of religion from each country. What was of interest to us was the ways the learning of religion in state (government or public) schools in majority Christian or Muslim societies differed or bore similarities.

Social and cultural contexts in religious education

While there is a great deal of literature on the roles, purposes and methods of teaching religious education, 60 *Journal of Religious Education* 60(1) 2012

there is sparse data on teachers' own spiritual experiences as a motivation for teaching the faith. The literature that focuses on these broader issues is vastly different in Indonesia (especially that in the Indonesian language) and Australia. The debates in western literature focus upon the disenchantment many children and young people feel about the Christian church (Crawford & Rossiter, 2003, Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007, de Souza, Francis, O'Higgins-Norman & Scott, 2009). There is a strong focus upon the possibilities of reconfiguring the expression of religious response in young people in relation to their beliefs and practices and of disengagement from the old debates on the relevance of institutional religion to contemporary Australian life (Engebretson, 2002, Engebretson, 2004, Harris & Moran, 1998 Kay & Francis, 1996). Australian and other western research has given attention to the loss of religious literacy among the young (Mason, 2004, McQuillan, 2006), reconceptualisations of belief in God (Tacey, 2003), the decline in the institutions of society like marriage (Freitas and King, 2003) and of attempts made in religious education to contemporise the curricula (McQuillan, 2006). On the other hand, research and writing in Indonesia on religious education has focused upon debates and mostly positivistic research on ways to traditionalise and reinforce belief and practice in children. The Indonesian literature is mostly based upon objectively devised research but unashamedly lapses into sermonising about taken-for-granted assumptions about religion. Surprisingly, literature on religious education in minority Muslim countries is thematically similar to the western literature but still does not lose its subjective value bias (Abdullah, 2005, Sharma, 2000).

There is strong theoretical evidence that pedagogy and the outcomes of educational episodes are shaped and constrained by external power structures (Carr and Kemmis, 1983 and Elliot, 1998). Within Australia, for example, religious education in public educational institutions must be contained within the context of not permitting the imposition of any particular religion nor for the imposition of any particular religious observance (Commonwealth of Australia, 1900). This constitutional imperative is derived in part from a similar group of limitations in the US First Amendment of 1789 and the US Supreme Court Ruling of 1947. Contemporary debates in the US on the status and function of religious teaching in state schools reaffirm that public schools are not the places for an imposition of any particular value system which might be implied by the holding of prayers with students or members of their families and the representation of faith in classes and schools (US Department of Education, 2003). By the same token and under the same rubric of the freedom of religion, schools in the US should not prevent the discussion of religious experiences by students.

Postcolonial education in Muslim South East Asia has sometimes been characterised as reclaiming the Muslim heritage so damaged by anti Islamic colonial educational processes (Anderson, nd). The western educational forms were thought to promote a non-Islamic philosophy that would mislead the people into

questioning the basis of their religious faith. Moreover, it was thought to be not only non-Muslim but also anti Muslim in its tacit acceptance of a morality opposed to Islam (Anderson, nd). Whether this was the case or not, the need for an Islamic foundation for education was nevertheless asserted (Diponegoro & Hanurawan, 2004).

Contexts and frameworks for the teaching of religion in Australia and Indonesia

Religious education is not part of the compulsory curriculum in Victorian state schools. Although state legislation allows Christian Religious Education (CRE) to be taught in state schools, the curriculum is developed and religious education teachers are selected, trained and supervised by an interchurch organisation accepted under government legislation called Access Ministries (once known as the Council for Christian Education in Schools). Access Ministries develops an 'agreed syllabus' which is accepted by its subscribing churches as well as approved by other faith based groups in Victoria. Teachers of CRE must be approved by Access Ministries and must agree to teach the agreed syllabus. State school teachers are not permitted, under state legislation, to teach religion so teachers of CRE must not be employees of the state. They are instead, volunteers who have enough time to take classes during school time, so tend to be stay-at-home mothers, self employed people or retired people. Parents have the right to agree to their children receiving CRE or indeed to exclude their children from it. In some schools, alternatives to CRE are provided. In Victoria, 70 per cent of state primary schools receive CRE (Access Ministries, 2011). Students who are withdrawn from classes in CRE are set alternative worthwhile activities for the time CRE is being conducted.

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CRE classes are generally 30 minutes in length and are taught once per week. There are continuing debates in Australia about the appropriateness of the teaching of Christian Education in state schools (Australian Association for Religious Education, 2011).

Religious education is a strongly supported element of the state curriculum in Indonesian state schools. The curriculum is based on Islam (alone) and it is taught in schools by trained religious education teachers who, like other teachers on the staff, are paid by the state education department. Staff who teach religious education do not generally teach other subjects in the curriculum. They go from class to class teaching only religion. The curriculum is developed and approved by the state and students are assessed in their progress in religion by country-wide external examinations (as are all other subjects in the curriculum). Children who are not Muslim may be permitted to attend religious education classes and participate in all religious activities in the school including the examinations. In general, only a few non-Muslim students would normally be excluded from classes. Majority non-Muslim districts in Indonesia such as Christian Papuan or Achenese communities or Hindu Balinese communities are not required to take Islamic religious education classes. Religious education is taught in two or more periods per week.

Research project

Methodology

A qualitative approach in research provides certain advantages in reflecting upon multiple realities in specific educational settings from the point of view of the respondents – the religious education teachers (Carr and Kemmis, 1983 and Elliot, 1998). It is not only descriptive but also explanatory (Punch, 2000) in seeking to

develop systematically a grounded theory (Glaser, 1978 and Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In coding data, a multilayered approach was used in order to examine meaning from language, voice and context (Glaser, 1992). We collected data and developed theory at the same time in order to set up interplay between data collection, coding and analysis to permit not only an internal validation of findings but also a capacity to develop theory (Goulding, 2002).

Findings

Selection of case study teachers

We decided to select a small number of religious education teachers in each country who had fairly similar characteristics. We wanted to represent the mainstream of religious education teaching in both countries, that is, religion taught in state primary schools by teachers of religion. We chose teachers of religion who were non-ordained, of both sexes, teaching at state (public) schools with at least five years of experience in teaching religion. We hoped to choose teachers who were strongly dedicated to Islam or Christianity because we wanted to highlight differences as well as similarities in religious teaching. The selected teachers were to be typical of teachers of religion. We chose the Indonesian teachers from Sekolah Dasar Negeri (state primary schools) in Yogyakarta (Central Java) and the Australian teachers from eastern suburban state primary schools in Melbourne (Victoria). Pseudonyms have been used here.

Name Age Sex Years of

teaching RE

Location

Brendan Tilson 65 M 5 years Australia

Jan Smoley 48 F 10 years Australia

Robert de Vister 58 M 5 years Australia

Jessica Spain 43 F 10 years Australia

Sutowo 44 M 23 years Indonesia

Salima 49 F 27 years Indonesia

Umahat 53 F 29 years Indonesia

Syaiful 41 M 21 years Indonesia

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We collected data from the teachers about themselves and their experiences as teachers of religious education in a lengthy elaborated interview with follow up discussion with the teachers at a later stage, as necessary. We recorded interviews and took extensive notes during and immediately after the interviews. Teacher' responses were transcribed and sent to each teacher for confirmation by email (in Australia) and mail (in Indonesia). Teachers reviewed their responses and amended them or added further information as they felt necessary. The responses of the teachers provided in this report therefore were approved by the case study teachers. Indonesian interviews were conducted in Indonesian and the responses transcribed in Indonesian. Subsequently, responses were translated into English by the researchers and their assistants. Even at this stage of the research there was interplay of ideas between the researchers and the case study teachers. Data were sorted according to patterns, trends and repeated or disparate responses. Language

was analysed in terms of cultural meaning.

Our interview was structured into a series of themes with a number of contributing questions for each.

Questions were the same for each interviewee although they merely provided a framework for the discussion we had with each case study teacher. Our themes were

1 the teacher's own spiritual development and experiences

2 motivations in teaching religion in schools.

1 The teacher's own spiritual development and experiences

The findings showed that each person had a significant faith experience as a child which, in most cases, was reinforced by parents (except for Jenny and possibly Robert). Organised religious activities formed an important part of their upbringing and these were mostly through children's organisations associated with the church or mosque (except Jenny). There was an expected pathway of religious development that they all seemed to accept readily and spiritual growth was a natural part of growing up (except for Jenny).

I always attended Church along with my parents. As a young person I attended Christian Endeavour (an organisation for young people to teach them the Bible and encourage them in leadership roles) and Youth for Christ (a Christian organisation that has a service role in the community as well as an evangelistic role). There was never a time in my life when I made a conscious decision to be a Christian such as going forward (to the altar in response to a preacher's appeal). I was baptized by immersion at 16 and I became a formal member of a Baptist church at 21. I attended many Teenage Bible Camps as a child and these had a strong influence on me. At university I joined the Christian group Evangelical Union (a conservative university Christian organisation) and Student Christian Movement (a more liberal university Christian organisation).

Brendan Tilson, 65, M

I wasn't brought up in a Christian home. My first experiences of the Christian faith were through attending classes in RE in school as a child. I think that the teaching I received provided the groundwork for my later coming to faith. The seeds were sown there...

Jenny Smith, 48, F

I went to Sunday School and church and all those things when I was a child in Sri Lanka because my parents sent me. They were nominally Christian but did not have a commitment to the church. The stories were extremely beneficial when later in life I began to question my faith. I became an atheist about the age of 19 because I just couldn't fit it all together. There was so much confusion in the world and too many conflicting beliefs and values – especially in Sri Lanka.

Robert de Vister, 58, M

Allah is one. I was born a Muslim but became a Christian at one stage in my life. When I was in elementary school, the PKI (communist) revolution was happening and many Muslims were killed because the teaching of Islam was being discouraged by the communist revolutionaries. Then Christian missionaries began to arrive in my area and I became a Christian. When I was a teenager,

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many mosques were being rebuilt and a Taman Pendidikan Qur'an (a school for young children

where religion is taught) called a 'Sekolah Sore' (evening school) was started. I attended it at about the age of ten and I came back to Islam because of the guidance of my teacher and my family too.

Sutowo, 44, M

I was in the Taman Pendidikan Al Qur'an (a school for young children where religion is taught) and my hobby was to read the Qur'an. I participated in (children's religious activities which included) publicly reciting the Qur'an and once won the MTA (a competition in reciting the al Qur'an) in Sleman

Syaiful, 41, M

Later childhood and early teen experiences of faith helped to reinforce earlier spiritual growth. Para-church¹ or para-mosque organisations took a greater part in training in later years (mainly for the Australians).

Important markers of growth were experienced by the respondents (baptism for Brendan and Jenny, sickness and recovery for Jessica, devotional schedule for Umahat, reading and reciting the Qur'an for Syaiful).

Some came to faith after a struggle of faith or conversion (Robert, through a pathway through atheism, Jenny, through a conversion from secularism and Sutowo in a pathway through Christianity). The others came to faith as a result of family encouragement or regular family religious observance.

All respondents emphasised the importance of educational processes in bringing them to faith. They had experienced religious education which worked well for them. Could this have been a significant reason why they saw the importance of their later-in-life commitment to religious education?

The Australian respondents seemed to emphasise personal commitment to God more than the Indonesians.

Australian respondents used language indicating a 'step' towards commitment such as 'There was never a time in my life when I made a conscious decision to be a Christian' (Brendan) and 'my ... coming to faith' (Jenny). However, the Indonesians used language indicating a continuance of a state or status such as 'I was born a Muslim' (Sutowo), 'I attended... I followed' (Umahat) and 'my hobby was to read the Qur'an' (Syaiful).

How important was the element of choice in following a religious pathway? It may have been stronger for the Australians who all mentioned the importance of a personal decision to become a Christian. There was only one Indonesian (Sutowo) who mentioned the role of personal choice in his conversion to Islam. Maybe the median expectation in Australian society is to NOT identify oneself as Christian, but in Indonesia, the median expectation is NOT to identify oneself as a non-Muslim. If there were a difference in the importance of choice, we were not sure that it was demonstrated here.

All respondents saw their adulthood as a continuation of the faith commitment they had made in their early childhood (except for Robert, who had a late teenage conversion and Jenny, who came to faith after attending a Christian camp in her teenage years).

I didn't have a major faith experience as an adult but I continued to grow in my Christian faith. I reaffirmed my faith at my marriage and as children were born into the family.

Brendan Tilson, 65, M

Later, as an adult, I joined the mosque's adolescent female group organisation called Nasiyatul Aisyiah (Muhammadiyah Women's Organisation)

Salima, 49, F

I hold classes in the mosque for housewives in recitation of the Qur'an. I also attend the Nasiyatul Aisyiah (Muhammadiyah Women's Organisation) every 21st day of every month

Umahat, 53, F

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Most respondents remained in or joined religious organisations and saw them as useful in their adherence to the faith. Prayer and reading the Bible or Qur'an were regarded as important. The major organisations of influence upon the Christian respondents was Youth for Christ (for teenagers and young adults) and upon the Muslims, Taman Pendidikan Al Qur'an (for children). These conservative organisations did not represent the religious right or even have a political agenda, yet their ideological and religious agenda was more likely to be traditional and conservative. They were both local or grassroots community based organisations.

All respondents, as adults, were active participants in the formal religion of their faith (except for Salima).

Roles performed were quite specialised and roles were often in positions of responsibility and respect. Many of the roles were related to education or at least, propagation of religion.

I was a deacon (spiritual leader) at the local Baptist Church for a short time. I was a Sunday school teacher for more than 20 years at the local church. I participated as a member of a small singing group that performed at church services and I used to play the piano and organ for church services.

Brendan Tilson, 65, M

I'm currently on the Church Council (Church governing body). I'm the Faith Development Coordinator at the local church which involves me in planning and monitoring the Christian development programs of the people at the church (including children). I'm also a worship leader for Sunday church services and lead the congregation in singing and prayer... And, of course, I'm a regular worshipper at the church.

Jessica Spain, 43, F

I am on the board of the TPQ (Qur'an classes) of the Masjid Al-Fatah in Gedaren, Klaten Province and I often give the Friday sermon at the mosque.

Sutowo, 44, M

I am the official village Muadzin (caller to prayer); I teach the reading of the Qur'an and am the Khotib (Friday sermon reader/lay preacher)...I want the mosque to develop stronger devotion in the people, to guide children to read the Qur'an and for them to aspire to be the Muadzin.

Syaiful, 41, M

Roles performed indicated a significant commitment to the organised church or mosque and a deep commitment of faith. Both Indonesian and Australian teachers were exceptional in their service to their faith communities which would have far exceeded what their peers would have been willing to do. None of the Australians had any meaningful theological or teacher training (apart from Jessica's teacher training) except the compulsory in-service training provided by Access Ministries.

Motivations in teaching religion

The decision to teach religion in schools is shaped by a number of factors. We attempted to gain some insight into the decision by asking respondents why they taught religion. The predominant response was that

respondents taught religion because it was their duty as a Christian or a Muslim. Teachers often referred to the words of Jesus or the Prophet in demonstrating the imperative that the message be shared with children. Because of the Great Commission to go and make disciples and teach them to obey God's commandments. I'm not there to convert children to Christianity – that isn't my job. The Holy Spirit may do a work in the lives of the children.

Jenny Smith, 48, F

Because it is a way of sharing the knowledge I have gained. It is also a Muslim duty to teach children about religion. I also teach to gain a salary to support myself.

Sutowo, 44, M

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As a Christian, I like other people to gain an accurate understanding of Christianity (as well as other religions). I want the children to get an understanding of life from a predominantly Christian viewpoint.

Brendan Tilson, 65, M

Both Christian and Muslim teachers expressed the opinion that the message of Allah or God had to be shared because sharing it was an essential element of the message itself. However a further facet of this opinion was that the message could bring new insights to children or shed light on life.

I teach Christian education mainly because there is a lack of Christian teaching in the state school system in Australia. We are able to teach about the gospel of Jesus Christ where the children otherwise wouldn't receive it even though we're a Christian nation.

Robert de Vister, 58, M

Because it had always been my ambition to be a teacher of religion since I was a child. My family is a religious one and I received a religious education. I follow the Hadith (the Prophet's moral explanations of the Qur'an) and try to explain its meaning in a simple (verse by verse) way to others.

Syaiful, 41, M

The teachers believed that the 'gospel' or the 'message' of the Qur'an could transform children's lives and bring them into a stronger relationship with Allah or God. The Australian teachers seemed to lay greater emphasis upon this point. Others expressed the thought that the religious teaching children received enabled them to obey Allah or God: 'teach them to obey God's commandments' (Jenny) and 'a Muslim duty to teach children about religion' (Sutowo).

There was also a strong emphasis from most respondents on keeping the religious or spiritual tradition going through religious education. Brendan, quoted above, was keen to pass on a Christian perspective while Syaiful wanted to keep the traditional parent-to-child learning process going. Others quoted above affirmed this feeling by stating that we need to address the 'lack of Christian teaching' (Robert), 'sharing the (Muslim) knowledge I have gained' (Sutowo), 'daughters (or faithful women) should be teachers of religion' (Salima) and 'I myself like to learn and I thought it would be good to teach others' (Umahat). The concept of the religious heritage being faithfully handed from the older to the younger generation was powerfully represented in these responses. All of the Muslim teachers made some reference to this point. There are

strong inferences here that the role of the religious education teacher is that of the Muslim messenger or Christian missionary, that the role is a calling, and that there is honour implied and obligations accepted in following the call of Allah or God to represent Him in that role.

There were a number of other emphases in these responses. One was that the learning of religion was intrinsically good, worthwhile and enjoyable (Sutowo and Umahat) and another, that it was important to teach religion to enable the children to gain an accurate message, viz 'an accurate understanding of Christianity' (Brendan) and 'trying to explain its meaning (Hadith meaning) in a simple (verse by verse) way' (Syaiful).

Some gave responses on their motives in teaching religion that had little to do with spiritual matters. Sutowo was a teacher of religion to gain a salary and support himself, Salima had entered the profession because it was a well respected one in the community, Umahat had become a teacher of religion because her parents encouraged her to do so and Jessica began teaching to encourage more children to join the Sunday school at her local church. These kinds of responses were more common among the Indonesian teachers because their work as teachers was salaried whereas Australian teachers were volunteers and were therefore more likely to report altruistic rather than material motives in teaching religion.

Some teachers identified a spiritual connection between their faith and the pedagogical process. Brendan said that he tried to develop his teaching around the spiritual and intellectual needs of his children.

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I'm versatile in my teaching I like to have a two-way discussion with my students where I encourage them to think. If the children ask questions, I feel I'm getting the lesson across. I like to load up the lessons with questions to get the children thinking.

Brendan Tilson, 65, M

Jenny was more direct in saying

I hope I project my faith in my teaching

Jenny Smith, 48, F

Robert referred to his desire to show commitment to his faith

I think passion is very important.

Robert de Vister, 58, M

Jessica indicated a dependence upon God in her teaching

I pray a lot about lessons I take as I prepare them. I believe in thorough preparation to ensure the success of the lesson.

Jessica Spain, 43, F

Umahat referred to a spiritual mentor as well as to her parents in setting the spiritual tone of her teaching

I think I'm a good teacher of religion because I've been well taught by my parents and my religion teacher (spiritual mentor).

Umahat, 53, F

Our analysis showed that motivations for teaching religion could be reduced to four major clusters of factors

1. I am compelled by the message and by the need to tell it (Brendan, Jenny, Robert Sutowo, Syaiful)
2. Allah or God gave me the gifts of spiritual awareness and vitality and others can receive those gifts too (Jenny, Salima, Umahat, Syaiful)
3. The community and nation needs a greater devotion to Allah or God to function better (Brendan, Jenny, Robert, Sutowo, Umahat, Syaiful)
4. I had a wonderful personal experience of Allah or God and others can gain that too (Jenny, Robert, Jessica, Salima, Umahat, Syaiful)

Teachers from both countries equally supported these contentions. Males were more commonly in support of the first and females the second. The third and fourth contentions were evenly supported by males and females.

Discussion

A major consideration in this research was the importance of the construction (or reproduction) of the gospel or the way in succeeding generations of the community. Religious education was sometimes conceptualised in the literature as a means of ensuring the maintenance of faith as a foundational aspect of local and national identity. The findings of this project showed that this happened in quite different ways within Islamic Indonesian and post-Christian Australian communities. Our case study teachers solidly asserted their sense of responsibility to teach the faith to the younger generation in as faithful a manner as possible (given their personal perceptions of faith). Both Indonesian and Australian teachers felt the urgency of this responsibility. But the social and cultural contexts within which these motivations were expressed were vastly different.

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There was a distinct difference in the way the two groups articulated their reasons for teaching of the faith. The Indonesian teachers provided dispassionate and rational reasons for teaching the faith while the Australian groups gave impassioned, theological justifications for their roles in the Australian community. The Indonesian teachers were performing a role that conformed to community ideals while the Australians were performing a role that was transformative and challenging to community expectations. This difference was not simply a function of the difference between religious teachers within schools – the Indonesians as regular salaried teachers, wholly accepted within the staffing structure of the schools, the Australians as enthusiastic volunteers and visiting teachers on the fringe of schools operations – although this factor was important. It was more a difference in the social and cultural location of faith teaching in Indonesian and Australian social landscapes.

Surprisingly, despite this fundamental structural contrast, teachers from both countries articulated the cultural or heritage function of faith teaching in a very similar way. Individuals from both groups stated that the message needed to be relayed as a way of continuing the religious heritage of the country, as an essential element of belief and behaviour for children in the community, as a means of maintaining the faith component of the community and as a means of promoting a better, more accurate understanding of faith. The Christian teachers however tended to emphasise compassion and God's love in these responses while the Muslim teachers stressed obedience, duty and service – those rather obvious identifiers of Christian and

Muslim faiths.

Conclusion

We concluded that teachers of the faith in both places evinced the following characteristics.

- ☐ Teachers of the faith had an unwavering and confident personal adherence to the faith.
- ☐ Teachers of the faith commonly had multiple roles in the mosque or church and had performed those roles from their youth.
- ☐ Mentorship or respect for spiritual heroes had helped teachers of the faith to define their spiritual call to teaching.
- ☐ Reading and memorising Scripture helped clarify a spiritual call to teaching the faith.
- ☐ Formal religious adherence in parents was often a key factor in teachers of the faith becoming religiously conservative.
- ☐ Religious conservatism or fundamentalism in parents was a key factor in teachers of the faith becoming religiously conservative or fundamentalist.
- ☐ Teaching of the faith in schools and other compassionate community activities were strongly linked.
- ☐ Teaching of the faith in both Indonesia and Australia tended to be an activity carried out by conservative adherents of the faith
- ☐ The socio-cultural and politico-social environments of the community were powerful influences in creating motivations to teach religion.

Teaching of religion in schools occupied a very different social and cultural location in Indonesia and Australia. A mainstream activity generally revered by the community in Indonesia, the activity was marginal (and often marginalised) in Australia. Within Indonesia, the formalisation of the teaching of the faith in schools established the activity within mainstream cultural activities of the community – an activity supported, funded and monitored by Education Departments across the country. Within Australia, the contestability of the enterprise and the public scrutiny of the activity was in stark contrast to (or perhaps matched by) the ardour and compassionate commitment of the teachers to it. However, their dedication and sacrificial voluntarism only served to accentuate the marginalisation of the activity within the secular community.

It seemed therefore that the national perceptions of the role of religion in society were fundamental elements in creating an environment for the teaching of the faith. These perceptions not only created the

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environment for religious teaching in schools, they also helped to create the individual religious identities, teaching personalities and religious motivations of teachers of the faith themselves.

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1 Para-church organisation is not associated with a specific local church but an organisation set up by people from different denominations to support the church's mission in general.

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